UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT Wednesday, February 22, 1939

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "BUYING A KEROSENE STOVE." Information from the Office of Experiment Stations, United States Department of Agriculture.

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In many farm kitchens wood and kerosene take turns cooking for the family. Very shortly now kerosene will be having its turn. During the winter the wood stove does the cooking and also keeps the kitchen warm. But when warm weather arrives, the kerosene range takes over the cooking jobs in many farm homes and usually all the summer canning beside.

Kerosene stoves are very popular with home canners. You'll find them in a large number of community canning centers where neighboring housewives do their canning together, as well as in home canning kitchens. Kerosene stoves have the double advantage of being "cool" to use for hot summer canning as well as being cheap to run. Some years ago when workers at the Washington State Experiment Station made a study of home canning costs, they found that kerosene was the cheapest fuel for canning, aside from the wood which the farm family owned and cut for its own use. Since that study, electric and gas rates have probably changed in many places, but kerosene still holds its place as a low-cost cooking fuel. And every spring a great many kerosene stoves sell for use in farm kitchens and also for summer homes and cottages of city people.

Recently Merna Monroe at the Maine Experiment Station made a study of the kerosene stoves now on the market. She has just published some suggestions helpful to anyone using or buying a kerosene cooking stove.

You may be interested first to hear what she says about the cost of such a stove. A 3-burner stove without an oven costs from 15 to 35 dollars. A 2-burner portable oven to use on the stove costs from 2 dollars and 75 cents to 8 dollars. But a range with 3 top-stove burners and a built-in 2-burner oven costs from 50 to 105 dollars. You can see from these prices that larger stoves with more burners cost more than smaller ones, and that a built-in oven costs more than a portable one. Style counts in price, too. A stove with the latest "lines" costs more than one with an old-fashioned appearance. But unless the new design makes the stove more convenient or easier to clean, it isn't worth extra money. Sometimes new and more expensive models are even less convenient than old ones. For example, those that have a drop-door to hide the burners may look nicer, but you have to lower this door every time you light or regulate the burners and that's a nuisance, looks or no looks.

Miss Monroe says price is no sure guide to quality in kerosene stoves. Some stoves that cost less are better buys than the most expensive models. The only way to be sure you are getting the most for your money is to know and notice the points that make a good stove. To be sure you are getting good material and construction, here are 7 points to check on:

First, be sure the surface of the metal is treated to prevent rusting. A baked enamel surface costs more but lasts much longer than a painted or japanned surface. This is particularly true of the inside oven walls.

Second, be sure the frame of the stove is thick and strong so it won't bend. A weak thin frame means a wobbly stove.

Third, be sure the bolts that hold the stove together are large. Small bolts wear through in time.

Fourth, be sure the springs on the oven door are of steel that will not rust or lose its spring.

Fifth, be sure the metal bowls that hold the burners as well as the wick holders are made of a metal which will not corrode with kerosene.

Sixth, be sure the inner cylinders of the short-chimney burners will stand up under very high heat. Steel inner cylinders cost more than iron but last much longer.

Seventh and last point: Be sure the wheels and rods that turn the burners up and down are of strong metal and turn easily.

So much for the 7 important points about the material and construction of the stove. Now for a few points on the performance of the stove. A stove that does a good cooking job must be able to give many different heats -- a high fast heat, a medium heat, a very slow heat for simmering and so on. It also must give heat that is even across the bottom of the kettle or oven.

Miss Monroe suggests that before you buy a stove, you ask the dealer if you can test the heating performance; or, if a neighbor has such a stove, test it at her house. To find out whether the stove has a fast high heat, see if a quart of water in a covered pan will come to the boiling point in 10 minutes or less. Then, to find out if the burner will give a low steady heat for simmering, leave your covered pan of hot water over the lowest heat for 20 or 30 minutes and then notice if the water is still simmering or has gone up to the boiling point. Now test the high heat of the oven. Light the burners and turn them to full heat. See if the oven will heat to 145 degrees Fahrenheit in 13 minutes or less. Then turn the oven heat down as far as it will go and leave the oven closed for an hour. Then look at the thermometer. It should register not more than 250 degrees Fahrenheit. To be sure the oven gives even heat, cut pieces of white paper the size of your baking pans. Turn the oven high, and when it registers 475 degrees, put the paper in for 3 minutes. See if the paper browns evenly, as it should, or in spots.

Tests like these may take a little time and trouble but they are well worth while if you are interested in getting a good stove and spending your money to best advantage.

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